MARCH 1999

FAA Aviation News

AVIATION SAFETY FROM COVER TO COVER

FIESTA '98

U.S. Department
of Transportation

**Federal Aviation
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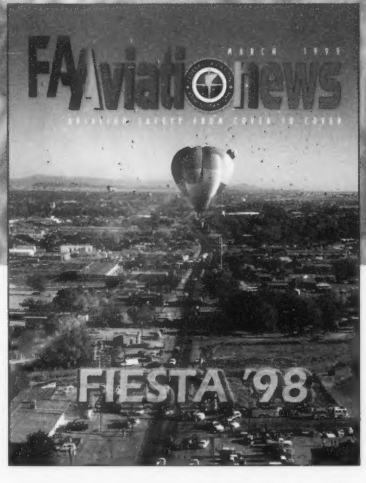
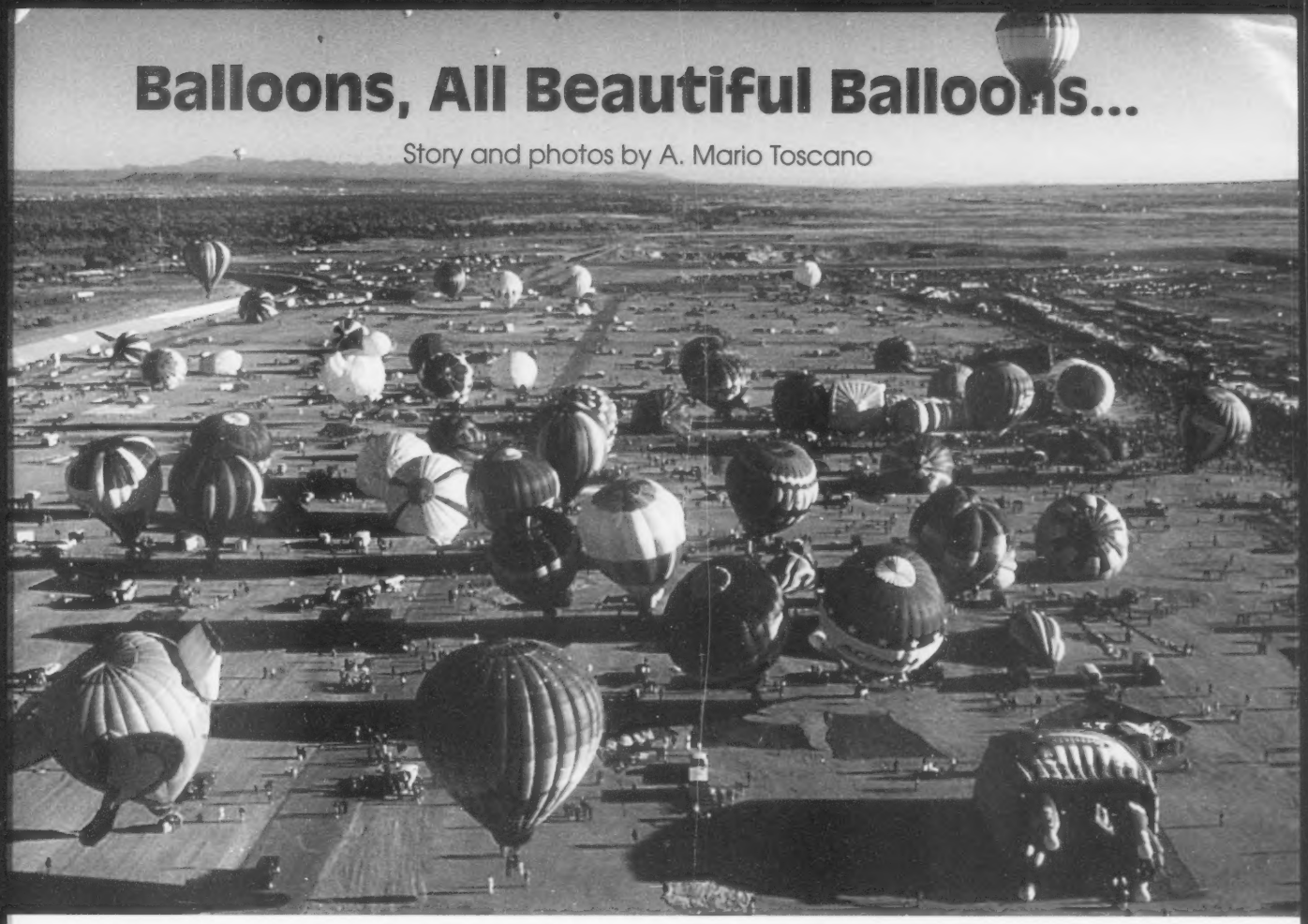


FRONT COVER: Hovering over downtown Albuquerque during Fiesta '98.
BACK COVER: "Splash 'n Dash" in the Rio Grande.(photos by Mario Toscano).

Balloons, All Beautiful Balloons...

Story and photos by A. Mario Toscano



From the air, as well as from the ground, Albuquerque's Kodak International Balloon Fiesta is an unforgettable spetacle of colors, adventure, fun people, clean environment, and aviation safety.

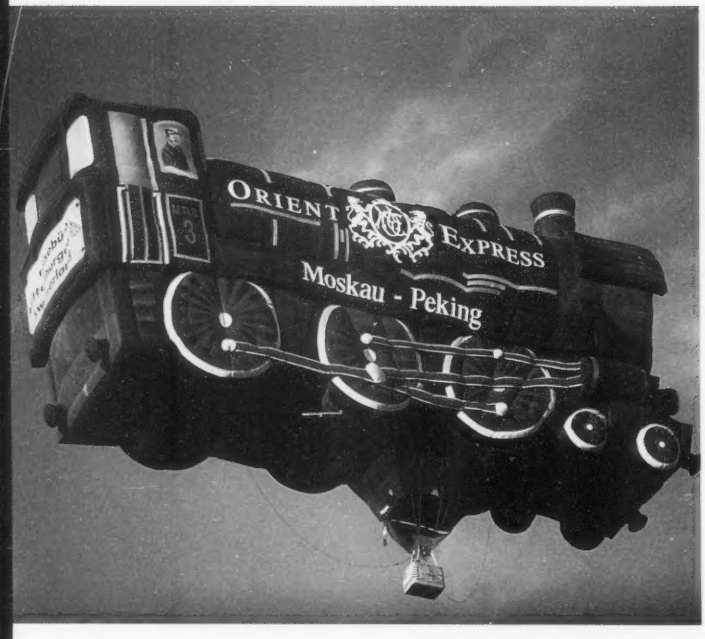
Albuquerque, New Mexico has slowly emerged as the ballooning capital of the world. Every fall, between the Sandia Mountains and the Rio Grande Valley, October's cerulean sky becomes a colorful masterpiece with balloons from all over the world. It's part art, part skill, part science.

I have never seen such a natural spectacle before. This is my first balloon event story for *FAA Aviation News*. If I can offer you through these lines and photos the innocent beauty of flight, the world from inside a gondola at 600 feet, I'll fulfill my deepest desire to properly share this unforgettable experience with you.

It all started 27 years ago, when Sid Cutter of Albuquerque, New Mexico held a modest event: the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta. In 1972, Cutter, known as the "father" of the Balloon Fiesta, began an incredible journey with the help of Tom Rutherford in one of 13 promotional balloons racing from the parking lot of a mall before fewer than 10,000 spectators. Now, Cutter soars among 873 balloons for a record-breaking attendance of more than 1 million spectators who visited last October's Kodak Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta. The world's largest balloon event in the balloon capital of the world got much larger in 1998.

Fiesta '98 broke all previous participation and attendance records in the 352 acres of Balloon Fiesta Park. Held each year in the first week in October, Fiesta '98 consisted of nine flying days, five morning mass ascensions, four special shapes events, three evening balloon "glows," and two "prize-grab" days. In addition to pilots from 41 American states, 16 international balloon teams participated in the event. In addition to a full-time paid staff of fewer than 10 employees, Fiesta organizers rely on year-round efforts of more than 2,000 volunteers, managed by a 24-member all volunteer Board of Directors to plan and execute the event. During the event itself, the Balloonmeister and assistant, safety officials, launch directors, field judges, propane officers, balloon chase crews, ground crews, pilot pack stuffers, and other support personnel, all volunteers, work non-stop for a successful event.

The valley at the feet of the Sandia Mountains that hosts the city of Albuquerque has almost perfect conditions for ballooning. The crisp, fall weather in Albuquerque is known for its clear days and cool temperatures. This weather pattern, known as the "Albuquerque box," is a combination of upper and lower level winds created by the San-



dia Mountains and enhanced by the Rio Grande Valley. The 'box' enable balloonists to back-track their flight pattern and land close to their launch sites. Cool air from the north near the surface will take pilots one direction while higher winds blow in the opposite direction (a balloon pilot needs to change elevation to fly back the original course). Some wind patterns allow pilots to dip their gondola in the Rio Grande for a 'Splash and Dash' like the balloon depicted on our back cover.

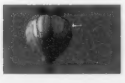
Gas balloonists are also drawn to Albuquerque's weather. The gas balloon has an enclosed cell that contains helium. While hot-air balloons float generally only a few hundred to a thousand feet, gas balloonists fly several thousand feet above the ground and attempt to reach faster winds at higher elevations. Because altitude is not controlled by heating the air, pilots use navigation, elevation, and strategy to use the weather patterns that sometimes take them thousands of miles away.

OPERATIONAL AIRSPACE WAIVER

The issue of a Certificate of Waiver for an Aviation Event is governed by Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), commonly referred to as Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR) Part 91. A waiver is an official document issued by the FAA authorizing certain operations of aircraft in deviation from regulations, but ensuring safety. FAR § 91.905 lists the Sections that can be waived, and it is the authority of the FAA's Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) to process the waiver request. The decision to grant a waiver is mainly based on a recommendation by the FAA-designated inspector in charge (IIC) and upon an in depth knowledge of the proposed operation and show site. In this case, J.D. Huss, a balloon-rated inspector with the Albuquerque FSDO, was the designated IIC for last year's Fiesta.

Principal among the many issues affecting an event of such magnitude as the Balloon Fiesta is the safety of spectators and participants. In addition to the responsibility that organizers assume for an operationally safe meet with target areas under event officials' control, the FAA has the ultimate responsibility to review the organizer's operations manual, and when satisfied that it meets CFR requirements, pertinent FAR and FAA directives, the jurisdictional FSDO grants and issues the requested Certificate of Waiver for the event.

When applying for a waiver, event organizers are also asked, though not a regulatory requirement, to submit a set of competition rules conforming to industry standards such as those developed by the Balloon Federation of America (BFA). To be eligible for a waiver of FAR § 91.119[b] and [c] the applicant must prepare and maintain an Organized Manned Free Balloon Competition Manual that has been found acceptable by the jurisdictional FSDO. The Manual is an extremely complex safety document that includes operations, personnel, letters of agreement, and the names of balloon flight crew members. The Manual is a necessary tool to assure that all operators work under the same standards. FAR § 91.119 (b) can be waived to allow flight over a con-



gested area at an altitude of no less than 500 feet above the highest obstacle within a 500 feet radius from the balloon. The section requires a specified maximum distance from launch and target areas. If a target area is small and does not allow for a normal descent of 200 to 300 feet per minute, the waiver will not be granted. However, the Section may be waived to allow flight over, but not less than 75 feet from, any open air assembly of people (spectators' area) under direct control of event organizers. FAR Section 91.119 (c) may also be waived to allow flight over open water or sparsely populated areas, no closer than 200 feet horizontally to any person, vessel, vehicle, or structure.

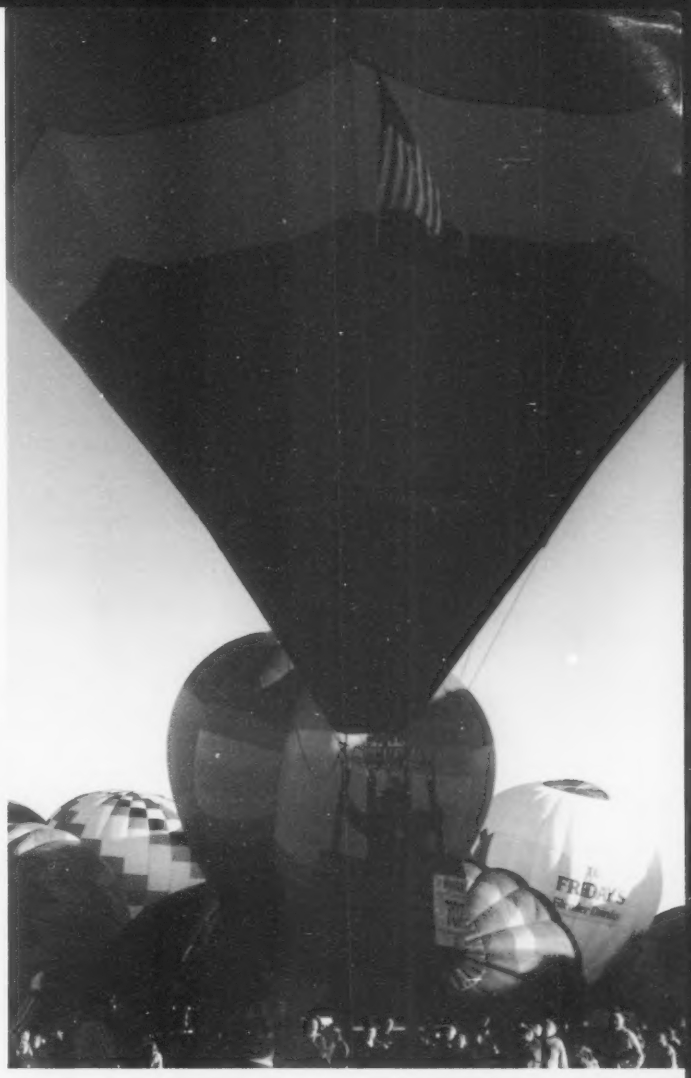
The maximum wind speed for launch and for the target

FIESTA HISTORY

Fiesta began in 1972 with only 13 balloons and fewer than 10,000 spectators. It was a distance race held to promote a local radio station at the Albuquerque's Coronado Mall. The next year, 13 countries took part in the first "World Hot Air Balloon Championship," this time held at the New Mexico State Fairgrounds. The event was established.

By 1978 Albuquerque Fiesta was the world's largest balloon event with 273 entries that year. In 1981, gas balloons became part of Fiesta, and in 1993 AIBF hosted the 37th annual coupe de Gordon Bennett, the world's oldest and most prestigious gas balloon race. In 1994, Fiesta hosted the 8th world gas balloon championship, and in 1995, launched the first America's Challenge gas balloon race.

Today, Fiesta is considered the world's most photographed event, drawing national and international media coverage, and is often featured on television specials worldwide. Fiesta, truly one of America's great events, is organized and executed by a full-time paid staff of fewer than 10 employees, an all volunteer board of 24, and thousands of volunteers who support all facets of the meet.



Albuquerque's Tami Stevenson-Bradley (left) and Troy Bradley during their press conference after winning the 4th America's Challenge race.

area is set by an agreement between the event organizer flight director and the FAA in accordance with aircraft limitations. Fiesta maximum wind speed was set at 10 knots.

THE FSDO's JOB

Before the waiver can be issued Huss has conducted a feasibility study, participated in several evaluation meetings, evaluated the application for waiver, recommended issuance, and now, he is the FAA official who oversees the entire event. Safety, from beginning to end, is the FAA's goal.

Despite the long process that involves the Albuquerque FSDO and IIC J.D. Huss in processing all waiver request requirements for an event of the KAIBF's magnitude, the real intense work begins after the waiver is issued.

The FAA has the responsibility to review the certificates and currency of all participating pilots, as well as each entrant's balloon airworthiness. No stone is left unturned. Like airplane pilots, balloon pilots must meet federal requirements for certification. To receive an FAA certificate, they must pass written and in-flight tests covering regulations, meteorology, and general ballooning rules. Minimum age for flying solo is 14, and a Private Pilot Certificate can be issued to an individual as young as 16. Balloon pilots also qualify with hours flown. Private pilots must have 10 hours of flight time, including one hour solo. Commercial pilots need 35 hours of flight time, and must pass an additional exam and flight check. Pilots renew their ratings every two years by passing a Biennial Flight Review administered by a commercial balloon pilot.

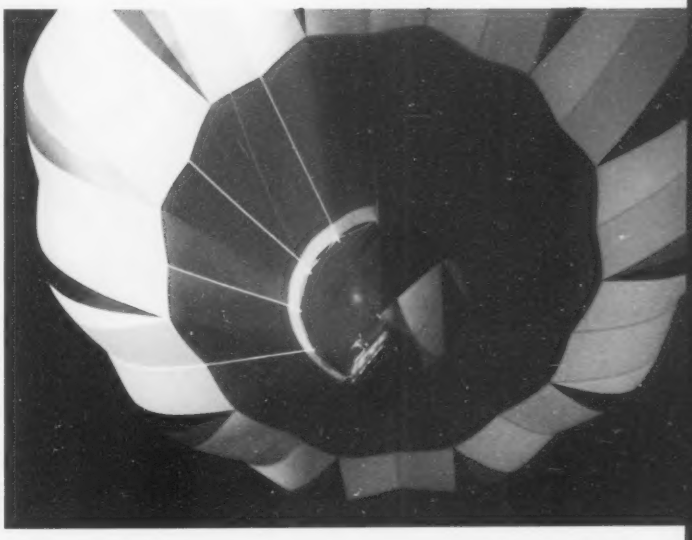
Balloons must be inspected for airworthiness every year or every 100 hours of flight time. Fabric, maintenance, and conditions in which a balloon is flown determine its longevity. Normally, a balloon that has flown 500 hours is considered old.

Typically, the IIC's day is 16 hours long. In addition to managing an FAA booth alongside pilots and crew registration to review required certificates, Huss is called to resolve last minute issues and to ensure that spectators re-

main clear from target areas during balloon competitions. He also finds time to deliver periodic safety classes for the young at the Fiesta Explorium and Museum, and to speak on safety issues. To help manage the voluminous work load during Fiesta, the FAA selects and sends several inspectors from neighboring District Offices to augment the Albuquerque's FSDO temporary 'office' at Fiesta Park.

IT'S FIESTA TIME!
HOW BALLOON'S FLY - LIFT OFF TO LANDING

The mix for a successful balloon flight is simple. It must have an FAA certificated pilot, experienced ground and chase crews, a suitable chase vehicle, and carry all required certificates. FAR § 31.85 discusses the required basic equipment of a hot air balloon that includes altimeter,



variometer, fuel quantity gauge, and an envelope temperature indicator. Desirable equipment includes protective head gear, markers, safety line, map, radio, transponder, gloves, and fire extinguisher.

A balloon's day begins two hours before sunrise, furrowed inside a round six to eight feet canvas container stowed inside its gondola. It arrives at the launching site with pilot, crew, and chase car.

The two existing types of balloons share terminology but differ in cost and weight lift capacity. The envelope is the balloon skin that holds the gas or hot air. The gondola, or basket, carries the pilot and passengers.

A balloon envelope is made of either polyester or nylon fabric coated with polyurethane. Its gondola or basket is commonly made of wicker, aluminum, or heavy duty synthetic material. To inflate the envelope, the ground crew patiently spreads (unfolds) the skin on a flat large canvas that protects it from direct contact with the ground and uses a large fan to blow cool air into it. As the envelope inflates, the ground crew holds the balloon's mouth open, while the pilot directs hot air from the propane burner into the envelope. Because hot air rises, the envelope fully inflates to an upright position. The gondola is securely tethered until the pilot signals his or her intent to ascend. After lift-off, the propane burner is used to control the altitude of the balloon. To rise, air is heated inside the envelope. At its peak, air in the upper portion of the envelope can reach 250 degrees. To descend, the pilot simply lets the air inside the envelope to cool down.

Balloons drift with the wind and cannot be steered. An experienced pilot can manage the direction of flight by ascending or descending. Most Fiesta balloons, limited by propane capacity, fly from one to two hours for a distance of three to 12 miles from the launch site and rarely exceed 2,000 miles above ground level.

New hot air balloons cost an average 20,000 to 30,000. A special shape balloon can cost up to $200,000. The propane, used to fuel the burner to heat the air inside the envelope last for one to two hours of flight. Propane is usually carried in 10, 15 or 20 gallon tanks, and fuel costs an average of $15.00 to $25.00 per hour of flying. The ideal time for balloons to fly is in the morning, when cooler temperatures and lower winds provide a safer environment for flying. Winds below 10 knots ensure safe launchings, and safe landings.

Gas balloons fly as a result of a lifting gas in their envelopes. In the United States the preferred gas is helium, which is lighter than air, hence the aircraft category. Gas balloons get their initial lift from the helium pumped into their envelope. Pilots then have

two ways to control the altitude of their balloon. To decrease altitude, pilots can either vent helium from the top of their envelope or wait for the cooler temperatures to contract the gas in the envelope. To increase altitude, pilots can either drop ballast (sand or water) or wait for warmer temperatures to heat the gas and cause it to expand in the envelope. Helium to fill the envelope for two to three days of flight costs more than $2,000. Again, to launch safely, surface winds must be less than 10 knots.

In addition to propane-fired hot-air balloons and gas balloons inflated with helium, solar balloons are now under development.

Most balloons at Fiesta are class AX-7 and AX-8, measuring 77,000 to 105,900 cubic feet. Generally, a size AX-7 balloon can carry three to four people, and a size AX-8 four to five people including the pilot. Balloons are usually 50' to 80' tall.

On mass ascension day the balloon must look its best. In addition to the public, the photojournalists make their rounds, selecting those which are more photogenic for their publication. It's a tough pick. Then, on cue, they soar filling the air with mystique and magic, showing off their colors to a multitude of bright-eyed spectators. The landscape of photographic possibilities is infinite: balloons inflating, flying, morning mass ascensions, and the magic of twilight glows. It is impossible to find a non photogenic balloon.

Finally, about an hour after sunset or after a safe flight, and if not engaged in a balloon night glow, the balloon is back in its container for the night, reserving the next day for more pleasant surprises.

PILOTS, GROUND AND CHASE CREWS

Ballooning is a group sport of mainly volunteers. Some volunteer for the opportunity to learn more about balloons (to include, occasionally, free

Left to right are James Phelan, 15, from Lincoln, IL; Steve Fossett; Ross Green, 14. from Lincoln, IL; and, Bridget Mayer, 12, from Colorado Springs, CO. Bottom row, from left, Jesse Satterlee, 14, from Boise, ID; and, Rosemary Tyszka, 14, from California City, CA.

1998 ALBUQUERQUE BALLOON FIESTA
October 3-11
FINAL NUMBERS

Registered balloons: 873
Regular shape balloons: 771
Special shape balloons: 83
Registered gas balloons: 19
Events: 13
estimated balloon flights: 6,637
estimated spectators: 1,067,036
registered pilots: 1,053
international pilots: 130
media organizations: 257
media representatives: 936
represented States: 41
Represented countries: 16

The 4th America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race had 16 teams from 4 countries, and three withdrawals. Albuquerque's team of Troy Bradley and Tami Stevenson-Bradley, pictured on page 4, won the distance competition flying 1,388.8 miles in 59 hours and landed in an area northwest of Pickle Lake, Ontario, Canada.

Texas pilot Steve Jones won the overall Hot Air Balloon target competitions, and was awarded a Cameron Balloon. Second place pilot Owen B. Keown received an Harley Sportster 1200.

This is New Mexico's "Duke," piloted by Bruce W. Hale. I flew in this balloon and got the cover and back cover photos of this issue.

flying lessons), others do it in exchange for a ride; some enjoy the customary New Mexican breakfast offered the crew by the pilot. But, they all do it for the fun and magic of free flight.

The professional pilot and crew relationship is vital to a safe flight. All members move in the same direction once they are briefed by the pilot on flight objectives. A good inflation and safe flight is not luck, but a well planned operation that includes all members of the team.

The ground crew prepares the balloon for its flight. Every pilot has preferences for preflight procedures and must thoroughly instruct the crew before inflation. Some pilots will name an experienced handler their crew chief (CC) to facilitate communications and task distribution. The ground crew is sometimes also the chase crew.

The chase vehicle and crew are extremely important to a balloon safe landing. That is the general crew's goal and sometimes extremely difficult to achieve. The chase crew's primary job is to arrive at the projected landing site as fast as possible. The crew, pilot and passengers, must then deflate the balloon, fold it, and pack it back into its container. The gondola, burners, and envelope are then loaded with a winch aboard the chase vehicle for the return to launch site. All this must be done according to manufacturers' recommendation to ensure that their balloon will be in an airworthy condition for

BRIDGET MAYER'S LETTER

November 28, 1998
Dear Mr. Toscano:

I would like to thank you for promoting the first Jr. Balloonist Balloon Fiesta Academy. It was a great experience, and I learned a lot about this sport. Thank you (FAA Aviation News) for taking an interest in the youth in ballooning - it is much appreciated.

Because of my experience with the Academy, I have become more interested in ballooning, and I am striving to get my student license next year (99). Thank you for helping spread the word about youth in ballooning. I sincerely hope the Academy continues, and that more youth become active balloonists through this program.

Also, Tina Reeves informed me that you are writing an article for the March 1999 issue of FAA Aviation News. How can I get a copy of that issue? I'd like to see the article.

Thank you (FAA Aviation News) again, and please keep supporting this great program.

Sincerely,
Bridget Mayer, Cadet.

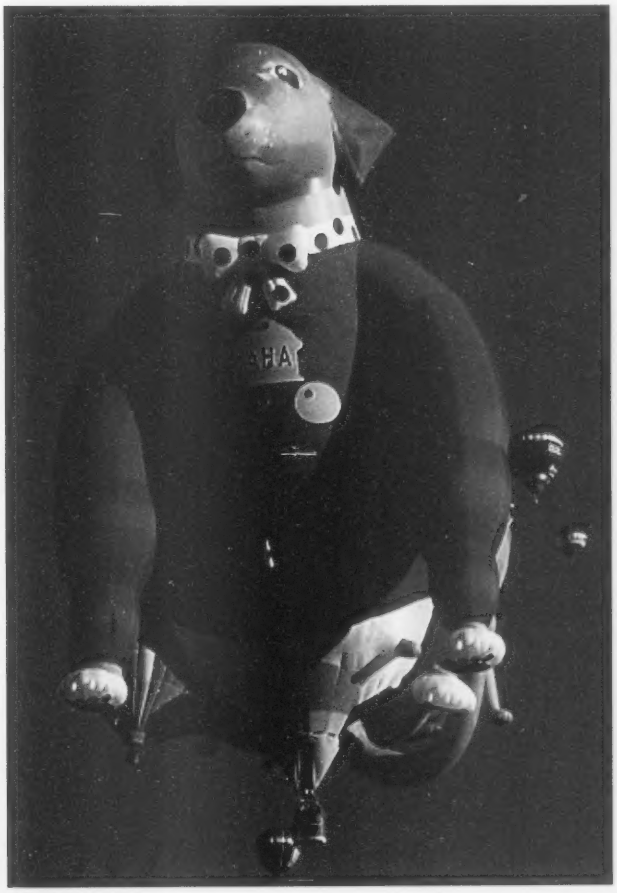
the next flight.

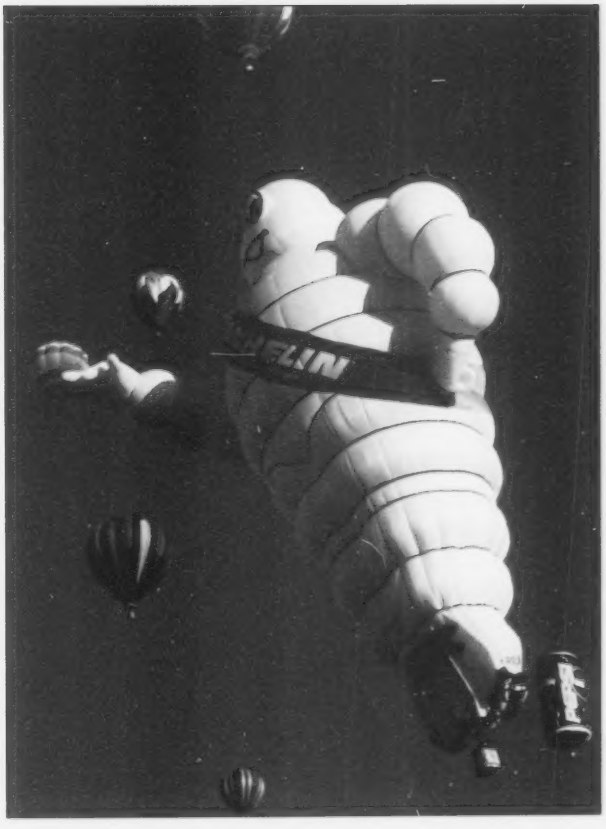
FIESTA- DAY BY DAY

Fiesta balloon days begin early. Most people are asleep 5:30 am when the Dawn Patrol lifts off into the night sky. Pilots rush to their daily morning briefing on the weather and conditions for flight, and to witness the launching of the traditional small weather balloon while their crews prepares their balloons for mass ascension. Controlled lift off generally occurs in waves, and is smooth, with impeccable rhythm.

The first Fiesta day is also the start of the America's Challenge Gas Balloon Race. America's Challenge is a distance race for gas balloons first started in 1995. Since then, America's Challenge participants have broken distance records that date back to 1912. Albuquerque's team of Troy Bradley and Tami Stevenson-Bradley, pictured on page 4, won this year's America's Challenge gas balloon race traveling a distance of 1,388.8 miles in 59 hours.

Weather conditions and pilot skill determine how far a gas balloon can fly. Changing altitude by dropping ballast and 'valving' helium, a pilot can move the balloon to altitudes as high as 18,000 feet. Strong winds can help balloon teams cover great distances. In 1995, Richard Abruzzo, who won the challenge twice, set a distance





world record flying his balloon 3,610 miles and landing in Virginia. Over the last three years, winds have carried the competitors into Southeast and Northern New Mexico, and to distant parts North and South. After taking flight, gas balloons become a part of the weather system. The aeronauts move up, down, and across as determined by the jet streams and weather fronts. Sometimes the ride is peaceful while other times it can be extremely dangerous. Some pilots recount of being sucked up into a storm cloud while others have experienced the horror of a microburst downdraft.

Morning flights, balloon races, and evening glows are spaced with entertainment such as a high school band recitals, Native American dancers, or a fireworks show. But, it's balloons nonstop until final mass ascension.

Balloon Glow and Balloon Night Glow occur just before dusk. Some 400 balloons are securely tethered and inflated. At the direction of the "Balloonmeister," burners are ignited filling the evening sky with breath-taking colors.

Special Shapes Rodeo is a collection of balloons made into intriguing shapes. The sky is filled with creative balloons such as a piggy bank, a three-masted sailing ship, a cow, a tennis shoe, a Royal Canadian Mounted Policeman on a horse, a replica of Noah's ark, and much more.

Through my eyes I believe that the most significant moment in the life of a balloon is when a balloon novice, like me, is on board. The first flight initiation is a traditional ritual dating back to ballooning's early days in Paris, France, 1783 to be exact, when the first balloon was introduced by the brothers Montgolfier. Curiously, the first recorded balloon flight passengers were a duck, a rooster, and a sheep. (And, they have not talked to each other since.) Today, novice "balloonists" receive from the pilot a souvenir pin (less than $10.00 value) commemorating their first flight and initiation. (Tip: After everyone is safely on the ground and flying is done for the day, insist on the traditional French champagne and cheese. It's free.)

JUNIOR BALLOONIST ACADEMY

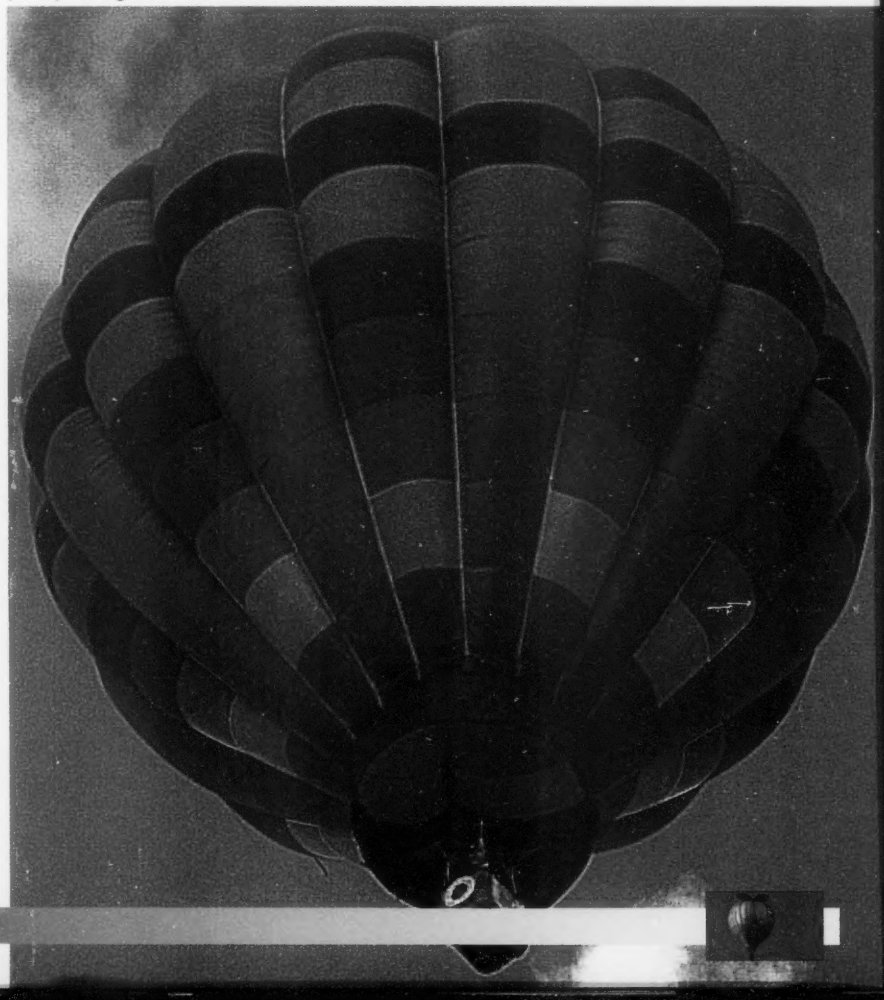
The Balloon Federation of America maintains the Junior Balloonist Program sponsored and coordinated by the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta Board of Directors. Tina Reeves, of New Mexico, recently elected BFA Director at Large, and Albuquerque's Dr. Steve A. Komadina, KAIBF Vice-President, run the youth program. Reeves uses a ballooning essay contest from her web site at http://www.stlmo.com/skyangel, to select cadets for the BFA's Jr. Balloonist Academy. The five 1998 winners, aged 12 to 15, and shown in a photo with America's legendary balloonist Steve Fossett, on page 7, participated in the Fiesta as ground crew members to learn the "ropes" from direct exposure to the sport. Their winning essays are published in their entirety on Reeves' web site. Selected entries receive round airfare to the Fiesta, room and board, a pilot package, and cadet uniforms. This year's cadets were guests of KAIBF's Vice-President Dr. Steve Komadina.

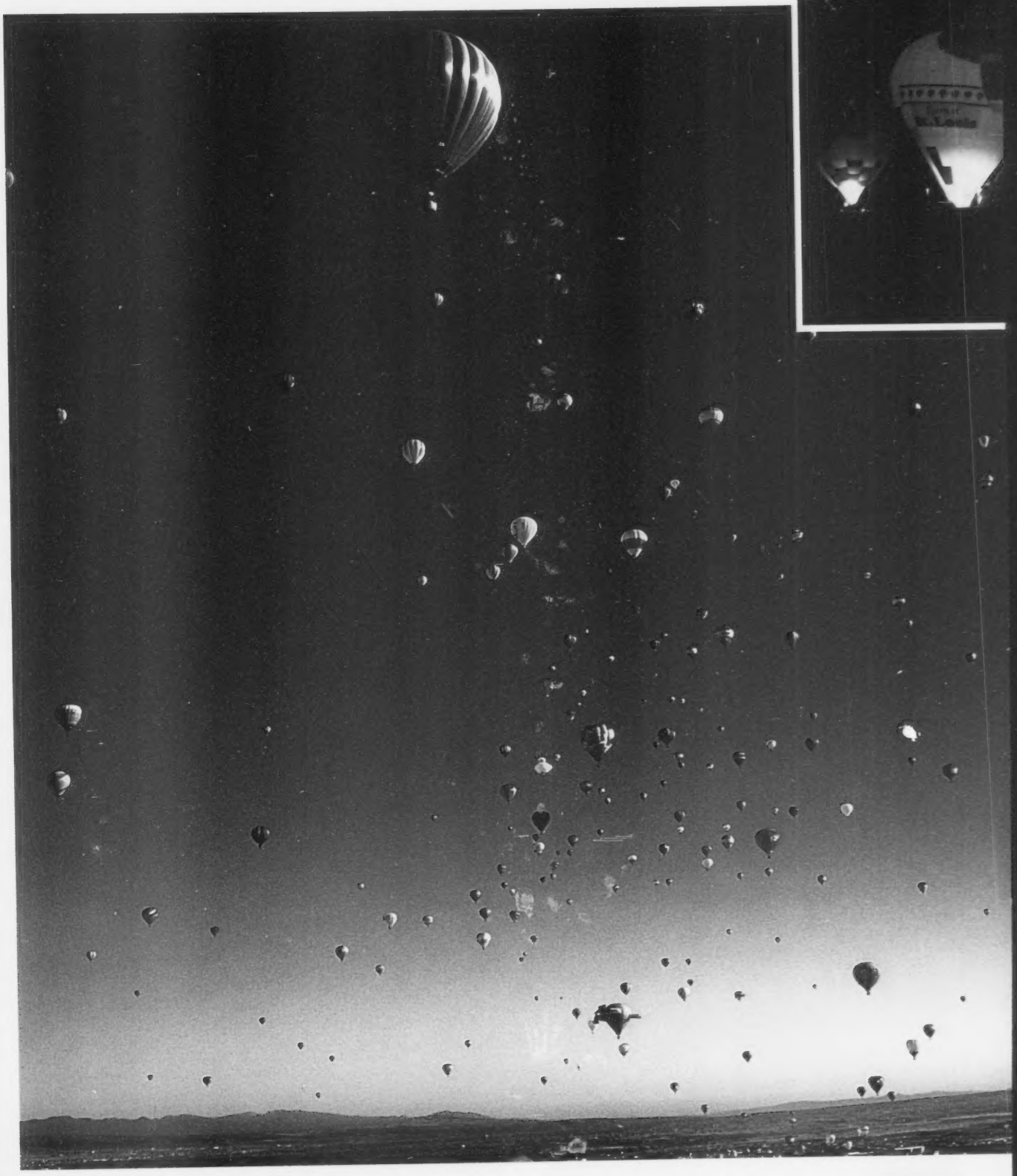
Reeves also publishes "The Jr. Flyer," a newsletter rich in ballooning information for young aeronauts worldwide. She welcomes inquiries and can be reached via e-mail at: skyangel@stlmo.com.

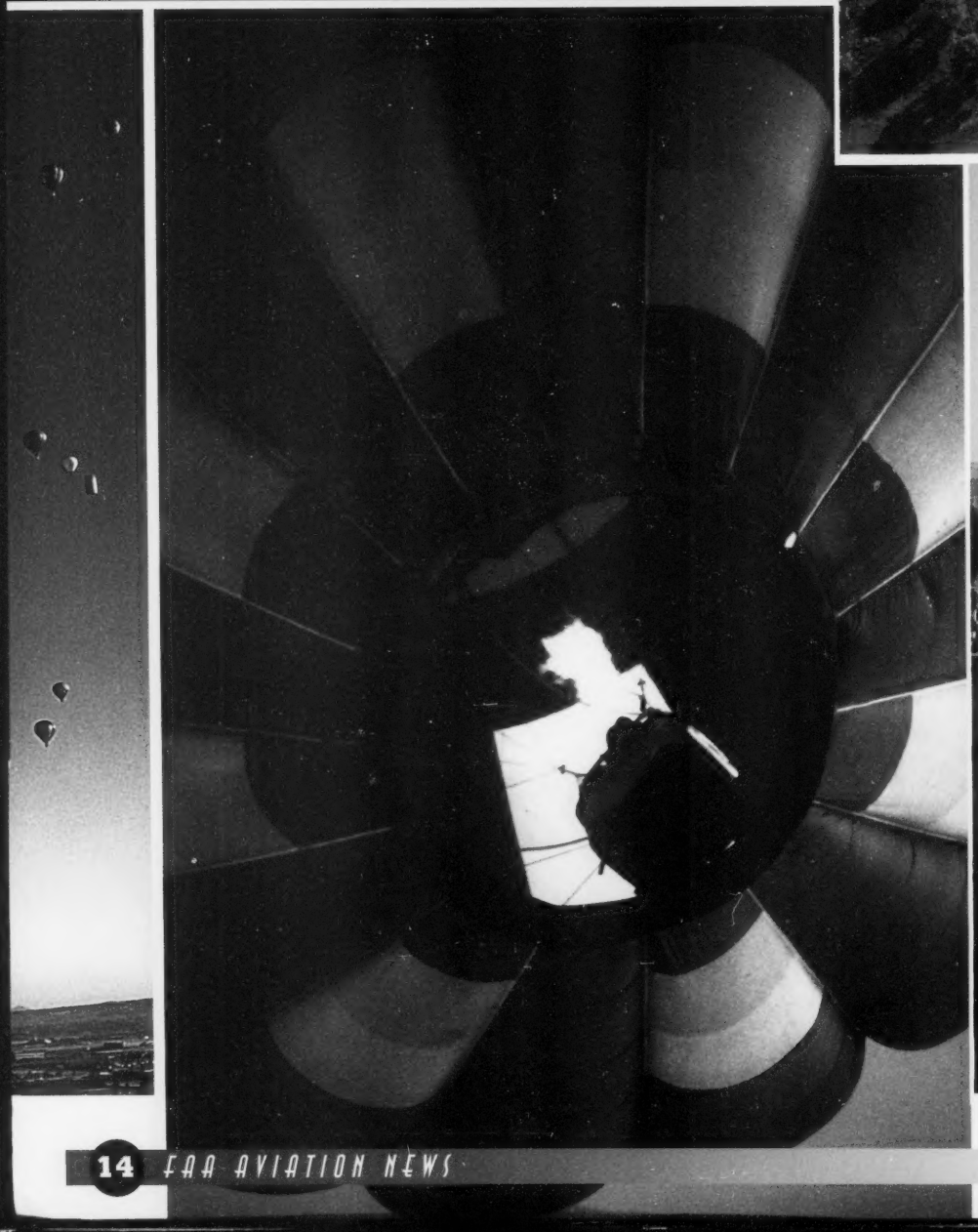
One of this year's cadets, Bridget Mayer, wrote me with her experience from the first BFA Academy. The energy that comes from this note, page 8, and the power that comes from the winning essays, is both profound and pure.

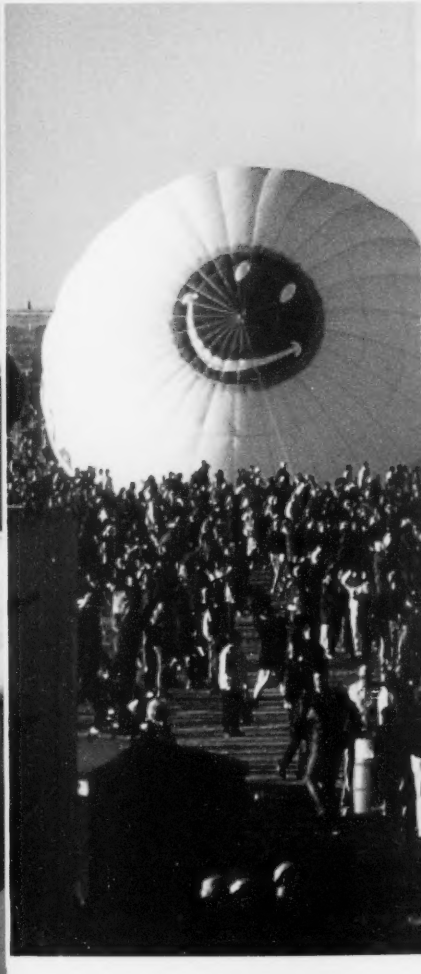
SPECTATORS

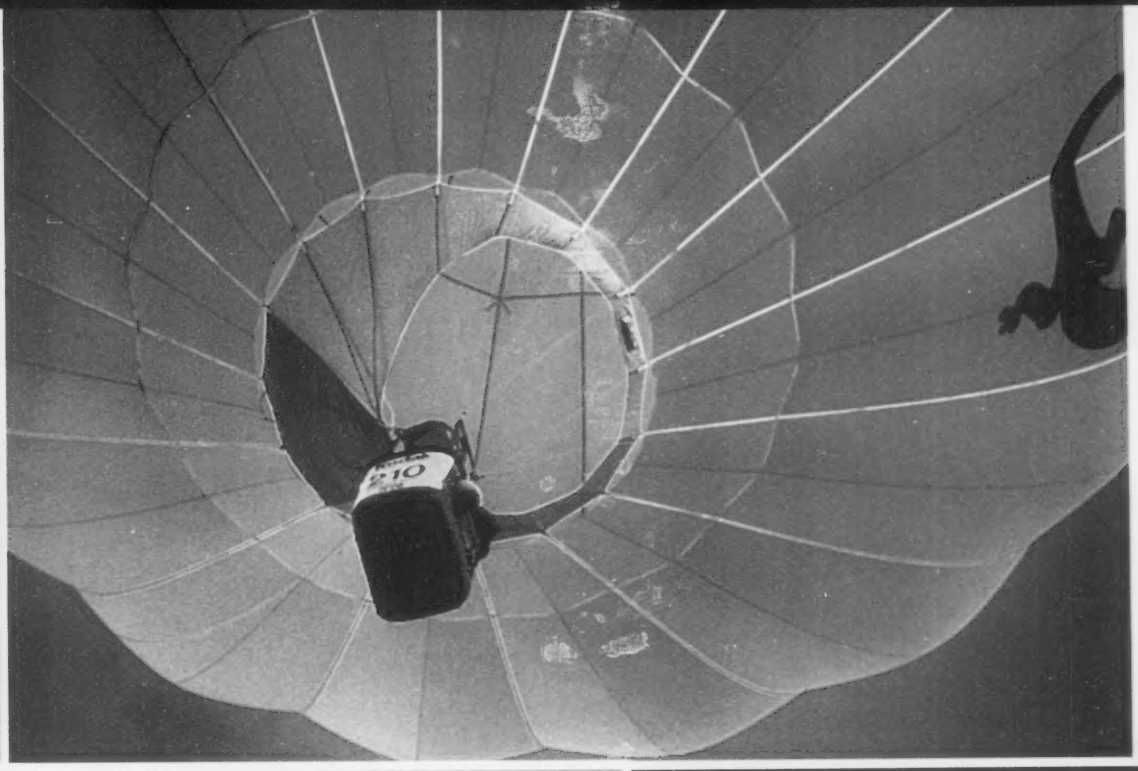
Organizers did an outstanding job in attendance logistics. Parking and transportation were ample, including access for people with disabilities. Spectators had a packed day with plenty of food, balloons, vendor pavilions, Balloon Explorium and museum. More than 2,000 recreational vehicles registered to stay at the Balloon Fiesta Park in 78 acres reserved for 2200

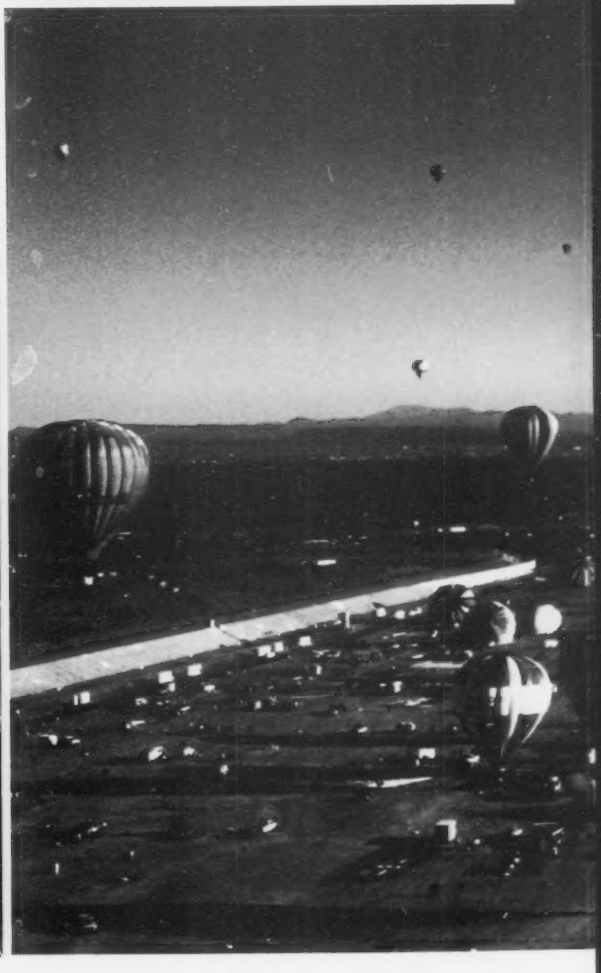












sites for campers and RV's. Most who come stay for the duration of the event.

More than one million spectators visited Fiesta Park while millions saw the event in television segments worldwide.

ALBUQUERQUE 1999, THE PREDICTIONS, AKA WISH-LIST

A few improvements have already been announced for this year's Albuquerque International Balloon Fiesta scheduled for October 2-10. The theme for the 28th Annual event is "Beat Gravity." So, this writer will be 'gravitating' in that direction comes next October. After all, I will no longer be a novice.

Fiesta Executive Director Paul Smith promises improved transportation and park access ability for next year's spectators. This year's Fiesta Board of Directors president is Dr. Steve A. Komadina.

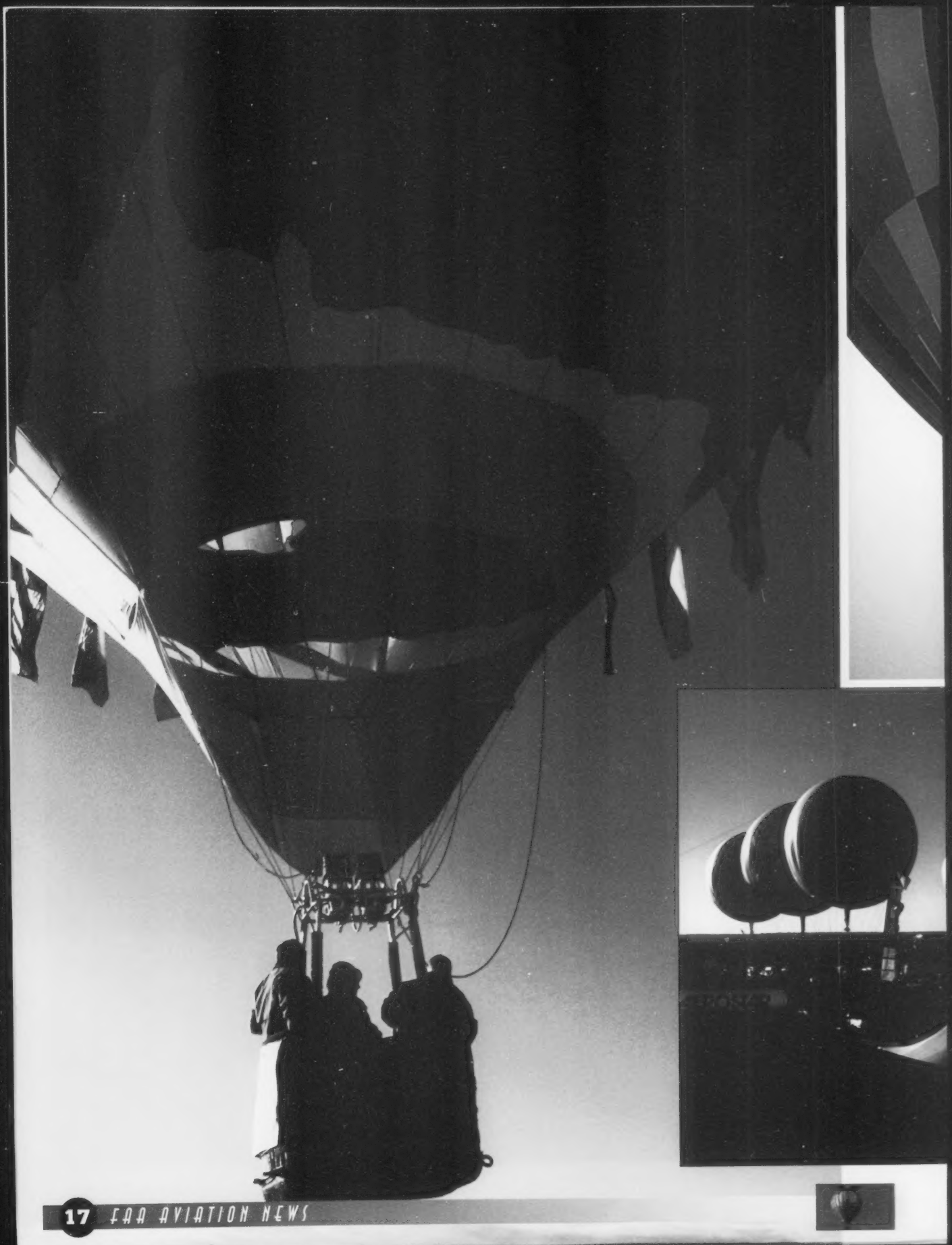
The FAA/Fiesta partnership will continue to strive for a safe event, executing a sound operations plan with properly certificated pilots in airworthy balloons.

CONCLUSION

Balloons are beautiful when hovering in the cerulean sky. Their mythical flight requires handling dexterity, extreme expertise. A seasoned balloon pilot begins to look for a place to land immediately after lift off. Safety is the primary concern.

The FAA achieved its safety goals because it found a genuine collaboration from the event organizers. The mechanics of safety are simple: work all the angles before they become problems that require improvised reactions with untested solutions. And, should there be a rough spot along the way, the strength of the FAA and the event organizers commitment to their partnership, most likely, have already anticipated it and dealt with it.

Author's Note: My thanks to KAIBF's Tom Garrity, FAA's J.D. Huss, the Albuquerque FSDO, the folks in the pilots/crew tent, and to all the balloons for their majestic beauty and inspiration. The Albuquerque's Balloon Fiesta web site is: www.aibf.org - Tel. (505)821-1000 and has tons of information about ballooning. Check it out.



It's part art, part skill, part science...

Sun 'n Fun 1999

by H. Dean Chamberlain

It's that time again. It's time for fun in the sun, or as I like to think of it, the annual spring trip to Florida. No, we're not talking about the annual college spring break mass migration to the beaches of Florida and points south. Been there. Done that. Too old.

No, we are talking about the major spring general aviation event in the U.S. Some may even say the world. We are talking about the week-long Sun 'n Fun EAA Fly-In in Lakeland, FL, which kicks off its 25th annual fly-in on April 11. This year's fly-in will run from April 11 through 17.

If you are planning on attending this year's event, you are rapidly running out of time to make your plans and reservations.

FAA has even issued its annual special *Air Traffic Management Plan Notice to Airmen* (NOTAM) for the event. The Sun 'n Fun 99 NOTAM provides detailed arrival and departure procedures for aircraft flying to and in the Lakeland area from April 9 through 17. *Note the special procedures start two days before Sun 'n Fun's opening day on April 11.*

FAA SUN 'N FUN NOTAM, VIDEO, AND FREQUENCY CARD

In addition to the NOTAM, the FAA's Office of System Safety has produced a Sun 'n Fun 1999 VFR Flight Procedures videotape and Quick Reference Booklet for Use in Flight which highlights the procedures outlined in the NOTAM. For a copy of the NOTAM, booklet, and videotape you can call (941) 644-2431. You can also check the following Internet Web Site for information: http://faa.nasdac.gov. Sun 'n Fun 99 information has been or will be published in the Special Airshow Section of the January 28, February 25, and March 25 FAA Notices to Airmen publication.

Even if you have flown to Sun 'n Fun in the past, you will still need to review the 1999 NOTAM for any changes. You also need to check the list of radio frequencies for changes.

If you have never flown to Sun 'n Fun, you especially need to get a copy of the NOTAM and study it in detail. You should also try to review a copy of the video. If you are a first time flight arrival, finding yourself number 10 in trail to enter the traffic pattern is not the time to wonder what is going to happen next. Pilots are reminded to always fly in trail as directed. There is no side-by-side separation.

Although the arrival and departure procedures are not complicated, they do need to be understood very well. The procedures are designed to move hundreds of aircraft safely, quickly, and predictably in and out of Lakeland by having both pilots and controllers follow the same published procedures. Knowing and following the published procedures are especially important in the case of an emergency at Lakeland or one of the outlying airports. VFR traffic can expect to possibly land on what is normally a taxiway.

Another important operational procedure is the limited use of radio communications to control aircraft landing or departing Lakeland. The NOTAM outlines when pilots should communicate and when they should just monitor their radios. Strict compliance with the published communication procedures will avoid any unnecessary frequency congestion while speeding up the landing or departure process. Pilots just have to remember their aircraft type and color. While monitoring the appropriate frequency, you might hear something like this, "Blue and White Space Cruiser, rock your wings for identification. Now, follow the aircraft in front of you to the airport." The fact you may be number whatever in trail should not intimidate you. You just need to be prepared to fly in an organized gaggle of aircraft to the airport where two or three aircraft may be landing on the same runway. All of this might be done without the need for any pilot to say anything to air traffic control (ATC).

Pilots need to be alert for radio, red smoke, or hand signals from *red-shirted air traffic controllers* located near the approach end of the runway in use for a possible wave-off signal. Landing pilots need to clear the runway as soon as possible onto a hard surface.

Pilots also need to review the NOTAM section about making after touchdown cockpit signs to expedite parking.

But every pilot should contact ATC immediately if there is any question of safety of flight or in case of an emergency.

Pilots should also remember some of the aircraft flying to and from Lakeland don't have radios. The NOTAM has a procedures section for no-radio aircraft.

The NOTAM also has special sections for both IFR and VFR aircraft.

VFR pilots should pay particular attention to the airspace information given because of the proximity of the Tampa and Orlando Class B airspaces. Like in past years, special procedures will permit aircraft without a transponder to fly in designated areas of the Tampa and Orlando Mode C Veils. The NOTAM has the details.

WAYS TO MINIMIZE RISK OF MIDAIR COLLISION

All pilots need to pay attention to other traffic as they approach the Lakeland area. Since there is such a performance mix among the thousands of different types of aircraft flying to, through, or in the Lakeland area during this period, there is an increased chance of a mid-air collision risk. One way to reduce that risk is to fly with your landing lights and beacon or strobe lights on within 30 miles or so of Lakeland. If you are flying on an airway, you might want to extend that lights-on distance. Pilots need to be alert for traffic from any direction as they approach Lakeland. You can also monitor

the appropriate ATC frequencies listed in the NOTAM when flying within the central Florida area. Everyone should use the appropriate altitude for your direction and type of flight, IFR or VFR.

Pilots should keep their heads out of the cockpit when operating near Lakeland. The Lakeland area is not the place to learn how to program your new GPS super receiver. The life you save might be your own.

Pilots should expect the unexpected because some pilots will fail to read the NOTAM, some will forget what they read, and some will simply do something dumb. The key to your flight safety is to keep your eyes open and be prepared to react to the unexpected.

ELT MONITORING EN ROUTE

Pilots flying to and from Lakeland should periodically monitor 121.5 MHz on their radio en route to check for any activated emergency locator transmitters (ELT) that might be reporting an aircraft accident. If you detect an ELT signal, contact the appropriate air traffic control facility responsible for the area you are in with the information. Please keep a record of when and where you first heard the signal and when and where you lost the signal. It might be a false alert signal, but it could also be signaling because of a real accident.

EXTRA FUEL

Another potential problem for some aircraft is fuel exhaustion. Because of the potential delay with so many aircraft operating at Lakeland, including the risk of an accident on the field closing the airport for a while, all pilots should make sure they have enough extra fuel on board for the flight including the appropriate IFR or VFR minimums plus enough fuel for an inflight hold of at least 30 minutes or more. This is a case where the more fuel, the better. Just stay within your approved weight and balance limitations. You may want to make an intermediate landing before Lakeland just to refuel to ensure you adequate fuel on board.

In addition to allowing yourself extra fuel, VFR flights should extend their projected flight plans by 30 minutes to compensate for any unexpected delays because of traffic.

All pilots should review the flight plan filing and closing procedures in the NOTAM.

MAINTAINING SAFE FLYING SPEEDS

Because of the mix of traffic, all pilots might want to practice flying their aircraft at its minimum safe, the operative word is SAFE airspeed, before arriving at Lakeland. Whether you do it at home on a practice flight or en route to Lakeland, you should be able to control your aircraft safely at its slowest recommended airspeed, its normally recommended cruise airspeed, and at a faster than normal cruise airspeed. The reason is you may be mixed in with other aircraft that may be flying slower or faster than you might normally fly. You may also need to be able to maintain your place in trail of other aircraft. But as the NOTAM states, if you cannot safely reduce airspeed to follow slower traffic, inform ATC and do not, we repeat do not, fly at any airspeed that jeopardizes your safety of flight.

The NOTAM explains in detail with charts and text the modified VFR arrival procedures in effect during Sun 'n Fun at Lakeland. All pilots need to review these procedures before arriving in the Lakeland general area because even IFR flights may be directed to follow the VFR procedures when the weather is VFR at the airport.

Because of the various planned flight activities at Lakeland during Sun 'n Fun and the special operating restrictions including when the airport is closed because of the daily airshow, all pilots need to review the NOTAM for such items as ATIS information and possible VFR holding procedures in effect, airport operating hours, arrival altitudes, airspeeds, airport surface operating procedures, airport safety notes, parking notes, radio frequencies, and other operating procedures listed in the NOTAM. Pilots should also review what areas to avoid when arriving and departing Lakeland. Reduced arrival and departure separation standards will be in effect during Sun 'n Fun.

Pilots should also bring their own tie-down gear and anchors if at all possible. With an expected 10-12 thousand aircraft operating in and out of Lakeland airport during this period, a pilot can't be overly prepared.

It is also a good idea to carry some type of survival kit. This is especially important if you are flying through either rough terrain or from a very cold weather area. The basic survival rule of being dressed and prepared to walk home regardless of the conditions and weather is always a good one.

ELT CHECK

After landing and before securing your aircraft, all pilots in radio-equipped aircraft should do a final radio check on 121.5 MHz to check for an inadvertent emergency locator transmitter (ELT) activation. With the large number of aircraft attending Sun 'n Fun, you can imagine the difficulty in finding the source of an ELT signal or the possible number of inadvertent ELT signals.

FAA SAFETY CENTER–WEATHER TO GO

While at Sun 'n Fun, visit the FAA's Safety Center for all your aviation needs. The FAA Safety Center has Flight Service Station specialists available for your weather and flight planning needs, Flight Standards aviation safety inspectors from the Orlando FSDO to answer your piloting or airworthiness questions or to issue certain certificates, various FAA displays and exhibits as well as an ongoing schedule of FAA and industry safety presentations. Many of the presentation are given by nationally known aviation speakers. Attached is the schedule of FAA Forum presentations. The FAA Safety Center Forum area and Production Studios open daily at 8 am. For those who arrive early, the first day of Forum presentations starts on April 10, the day before Sun 'n Fun officially starts. In addition, for those who cannot attend a safety presentation, many of the presentations will be locally broadcast within the airport area by Sun 'n Fun Radio, WPEP 788 at 1610 on your AM dial.

SURFING THE AVIATION WEB

Part 3

by Phyllis Anne Duncan

As promised here is the third and final installment in our cursory examination of FAA information available on the World Wide Web. In part 1 (November/December 1998) we explored the main FAA home page <www.faa.gov>, and in part 2 (January/February 1999) we looked at the information available on the FedWorld site, <www.fedworld.gov>. In this final installment, we'd like to present a sort of information warehouse, a site where the FAA has pulled together links that would be of most use to airmen surfing the web. Sponsored and maintained by the Flight Standards Service's Regulatory Support Division in Oklahoma City, <av-info.faa.gov> is definitely a place to bookmark.

You can get to <av-info.faa.gov> simply by entering that URL in the address block of your browser. (Note: I found that if I put www. in front of it, I got the error message, "The system cannot find the file specified.") Also, I'll once again use the same old disclaimer: All web sites, FAA or not, are constantly changing, and by the time you read this, the content and links I'll be describing quite likely could change. So, bookmark, and return to this site often.

<av-info.faa.gov>'s main page is entitled, "FAA Flight Standards Service Aviation Information Web Site," and it consists of 14 links to other significant FAA, government, and public aviation web sites. These links are:

- Airline Certification Information
- NTSB Accidents
- FAA Incidents
- FAA Enforcements
- Airworthiness Directives
- Aircraft Information
- Aviation Schools
- Public Aviation Sites
- FAA Homepage
- Other Government Sites
- FedWorld
- Forms
- AFS Directory
- Regulatory Support Division (AFS-600)

Let's take a brief tour of each link.

From <av-info.faa.gov>, click on the first link, "Airline Certification Information," and you'll see a fairly typical search engine. Beneath the search engine itself are two additional links, "Definitions and terms" and "Database contents and limitations." When you click on "Definitions and terms" you get a glossary which will help you understand what you obtain from your search. For example, there is the definition of "operator" and "DBA - Doing Business As," and so on. The "Database contents and limitations" link takes you to a description of what you can expect to obtain from a search of the databases, plus a disclaimer that the information may not be complete or current.

For a search you can enter the first few characters of an airline's name then click on "Search." As an example, let's enter the letters amer in the box and search. (Note: The search engine is not case sensitive, so you can enter all lower case letters, all upper case letters, or an initial cap—Amer, in this case—and receive the same results.) The search results contain a list of operators who have "Amer" either in their legal name or their DBA. Our search example resulted in nine hits, and when they appear on your screen you'll see that they are in blue, meaning they are a hyperlink. One of our options is Mesa Airlines Inc., whose DBA is America West Express. Let's click on that.

What we get is a thumbnail of information about Mesa Airlines, including a link to its Internet site, its FAA designator code and certificate number, the number of years in business, date of certification, what FAA office issued the certificate and where that office is located, the airports served by the carrier, the kind of operation, its other DBA's, and the make and model and count of the aircraft it operates. This is the most basic of information about a carrier, but to use other features of this site, which we'll talk about in a moment, you would want to visit here first to obtain the FAA designator code, for example, or the legal name of the airline.

Click on the "Back" button of your browser to return to your original search results. You can click on another airline or click on "Previous Page" to return to the Search engine for another search. From the search engine, you can click on "Previous Page" again to return to <av-info.faa.gov>.

The next link is "NTSB Accidents," and when you click on that, you get to a searchable database of accidents and incidents investigated by the FAA and NTSB. From this page, you can also link to a description of the database, a glossary, etc., but what we want to concentrate on is the search engine on this page.

The beauty of this search engine is that you don't have to know everything about an accident to look it up in the database. You don't even have to be specific about the time or place. This page tells you how the NTSB defines what is an accident and what is an incident and that the database is set automatically for certain defaults; e.g., the most recent five years' worth of accidents, and data retrieved will be accidents, not incidents. You will be able to go in and change these defaults to customize the report that you want. ✈

At the top of the "form" is a date that tells you that the data you'll recover is current as of that date, and it's usually a couple of weeks behind the date you're searching. This database is massive, and is constantly being updated. Also, if an accident happened last week, it's not likely to show up, and if a recent accident is in the database, there will be no causal factor defined for it.

You do not have to fill in all the blanks in this form. You can do a broad search by entering a word or phrase in the top box and then clicking on "Begin Search" at the bottom of the page. If you use a broad phrase, such as "inflight icing," you're likely to get more information than you know what to do with. s

It's always best to refine your search as much as possible, so you don't spend hours glued to the monitor searching for the one piece of information you need. The best way to narrow the search is to enter your word or phrase in the top box, and then limit the time frame by entering a start and end date in the "Date Range" boxes. Entering a specific state in the "State" box will narrow it further. In fact, the more information you already know and can enter will refine your results even further, including entering the operator's name. This is where the information you obtained from the previous link comes in handy.

So, let's give that a try. In the "word or phrase" box, enter "landing accidents." In the date range, enter a start date of 01/01/95 and an end date of 12/31/98. Click on the "Operator (Airline)" box and you'll see a pop-up menu appear. Scroll through that until you see Mesa Airlines Inc. then highlight that. Click on "Begin Search."

When the search results are displayed, it begins with a summary of what you entered: the search string, date range, event type, and the operator. Then, the numbers are displayed. In our example (search conducted in mid-January), we get the message, "The above criteria resulted in 0 reports out of 41,909 possible; 0 are displayed below."

Had there been results to the search, they would have been listed below the report. Each accident is assigned a unique number, which will appear in the list. When you click on the number, you are taken to a summary report of that accident, when contains, where, when, who, what, the probable cause, and so forth.

One caveat here. What you'll be getting is raw data. Granted it has been analyzed to a certain extent by the FAA and the NTSB, but don't unnecessarily alarm yourself when you see results on a particular operator. Consider the definition of an accident—"an occurrence associated with the operation of an aircraft which takes place between the time any person boards the aircraft with the intention of flight and until all such persons have disembarked, and in which any person suffers death or serious injury, or in which the aircraft receives substantial damage." Not all accidents are the catastrophic events viewed on television. Every day, aircraft are damaged by baggage carts, refueling trucks, debris from runways, and so on. These are sometimes classified as accidents, depending upon the severity of the damage. A passenger could have a heart attack and die in flight, and it would be counted as an accident. I provide these examples to show that some accident occur which do not reflect on an airline's safety commitment, and each accident has to be analyzed by experts to determine trends. Raw data can be misleading to those who may not be trained in interpreting that data.

Back up to <av-info.faa.gov> again and select the link, "FAA Incidents." The search page is almost the same as that for accidents, so I won't belabor that again; however, this page is defaulted to search only those occurrences which do not meet the definition of an accident. The same caveat for accidents applies to the data from any searches conducted on this link as well.

"FAA Enforcements" is the next major link on <av-info.faa.gov>. This is a quarterly report of enforcement actions the FAA has taken against operators. Enforcement actions can involve non-compliance with safety or security regulations. When you click on "FAA Enforcements" you receive a description of what enforcement actions are, some definitions, and an outline of the penalties that can be imposed. In a box on the right side of the page, you can select the quarter you want to view. Let's select the third quarter of 1998, April 1 - June 30, and click on "Submit."

A table comes up on the screen which gives you the name of the operator, the type of operator, the date the non-compliance became known, the action FAA took, the amount of the fine (if any), the type of violation, and the date the case was closed. In this table extensive abbreviations are used, so you'll need to refer to the definitions on the "FAA Enforcements" opening page.

Again, this data can give you only the most general picture of an operator's compliance history and status.

Back to <av-info.faa.gov> again to a link that aircraft owners and aircraft mechanics will find extremely useful—"Airworthiness Directives." From this link you can view AD's for the current year, notices of proposed rulemaking, special airworthiness information bulletins, and an AD index.

Because I'm writing this article in mid-January, there were only two emergency AD's thus far for 1999 when I clicked on the "Airworthiness Directives" button on the opening page. You can click on a listed emergency AD and get the full details—the problem and the actions needed to correct it, including any deadlines for the action to be accomplished. Under the heading "AD's" you can view the AD's issued for the most current week—in my case January 18 -22 (there were six)—and also for previous weeks. Also under the heading "AD's" you can click on an alphabetical listing of AD's, which may be easier to use. When you find your make of aircraft, click on the blue highlighted AD number to see the actual AD.

Back up to the opening page and click on "Notices of Proposed Rulemaking." This page lists Notices of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) by the month the comments are due. NPRM

can be AD's, proposed new regulations, or changes to existing regulations. By clicking on the blue-highlighted number of the NPRM, you can read the entire NPRM, which contains information on how you can comment.

Back on the AD opening page, click on the "Special Airworthiness Information Bulletins" button. Special Airworthiness Information Bulletins alert owners and operators of potential problems with specific aircraft, and this page lists them by make and model. Then, you can click on the blue-highlighted number and read what prompted the bulletin. Information bulletins are not regulatory like AD's; merely, they provide information you might want your mechanic to look into for your aircraft and fix before it can become a safety problem.

Back on the opening page again, click on the "AD Index" button, and you'll see that you can select an index for either small or large aircraft or for appliances. To view the indices requires Adobe Acrobat Reader, you if you haven't already down-loaded that from another FAA site (it's free), you'll be prompted to do so before you can view any of the indices. The index is a huge document—more than 300 pages for the small aircraft index alone—and the search capabilities of Reader are limited to word searches. But with Adobe Acrobat Reader, you can save the index to a file and print it out later.

Move back to <av-info.faa.gov> again and click on "Aircraft Information." This takes you to a page with another set of links:

- General Aviation Airworthiness Alerts
- Aircraft Fleet Age Information
- Service Difficulty Report Summaries
- Technical Standard Orders
- Airworthiness Directives
- Type Certificates/Supplemental Type Certificates
- Repair Stations

Click on the top button, "General Aviation Airworthiness Alerts." This takes you to a new on-line publication which used to be a highly popular printed advisory circular. Malfunction and Defect reports received by the FAA are reviewed and analyzed and significant problems are reported in the Alerts. From the Alerts page, you can view the current and previous issues, search a database of the M&D reports, e-mail the Alerts manager, or fill in an on-line FAA Form 8010-4, Malfunction and Defect Report and send it directly to the proper place, all on-line.

Just a reminder here. Many of the web pages we've cited in this article have links to other FAA pages, usually at the bottom of the page. I haven't mentioned them specifically because of space and the MEGO factor (My Eyes Glaze Over). Don't forget to check out the hyperlinks you might find on any given page. As we've said before the amount of information available is almost staggering.

Back up from the Alerts page to the opening page of "Aircraft Information" and click on the next button, "Aircraft Fleet Age Information." This page contains a list by make of aircraft and the average age of the total fleet of aircraft, that is, the total number of that particular aircraft in service. Many operators could have that aircraft as part of their fleets. Notice that the aircraft make is highlight in blue, meaning it's a hyperlink. When you click on it, you initially get a warning that you're about to enter a non-FAA site, and we can't guarantee the accuracy of the information. (Oh, those lawyers.) Click on continue, and you'll find that it takes you generally to the manufacturer's public web site, usually their home page.

Back up again to the "Aircraft Information" opening page and click on "Service Difficulty Report Summaries." You're taken to a list of FAA published aviation safety information. It will look familiar if you surfed through FedWorld in part 2 of this series. You'll have to scroll through the list until you see a number beginning with SDR then click on that to view the Service Difficult Report. I had more luck clicking on a file with a .pdf prefix (opens Adobe Acrobat Reader) than viewing the .txt files.

Return to "Aircraft Information" and click on "TSO," which takes you to the FAA's Aircraft Certification home page. On the lefthand frame of the page, scroll down until you see "TSOs" and click on that. This takes you to a page where you can view a TSO index, a list of current, proposed, or canceled TSO's, and an FAQ section on TSO's.

Back at the "Aircraft Information" page, the next button is "Airworthiness Directives," but since we've already discussed that, we won't go there. The next button after that is "TC/STC." Like the "TSO" button, this takes you to the FAA Aircraft Certification Home Page where you can find links to TC's and STC's in the left-hand frame of the page.

The final button under "Aircraft Information" is one labeled, "Repair Stations." This site is currently (as of mid-January) under construction. It may be up and running by the time you receive this issue.

Click on the "Back" icon until you get back to <av-info.faa.gov> where the next link is "Aviation Schools." When this link is completed, you'll be able to view a list of all pilot schools and mechanic schools in the country. Currently, the link is under construction.

The next four links on <av-info.faa.gov> are "Public Aviation Sites," "FAA Homepage," "Other Government Sites," and "FedWorld." "Public Aviation Sites" is a list of non-FAA sites on the public web, and I'll let you explore them at your leisure rather than list them here—they'll probably change anyway. "FAA Homepage" and "FedWorld" we've already covered in parts 1 and 2 respectively of this series. "Other Government Sites" takes you to three sites previously mentioned in either this article or parts 1 and 2—NTSB, Aviation Safety Reporting System, and the Bureau of Transportation Statistics—so we won't re-cover that ground either. (I can hear the sighs of relief.)

The next button in <av-info.faa.gov> is "Forms." We're a bureaucracy, so it's just natural that we have a plethora of forms necessary to that bureaucratic function. Rounding up the one you need can be vexing, say, when your CFI certificate is about to expire and you can't put your hands

on a copy of the application form. This page has FAA forms in .pdf format, so that they can be downloaded, printed, and used. The site even contains instructions on how to print the forms properly so that they won't be rejected by the FAA.

The next to last button is the "AFS Directory," which is an electronic telephone directory to FAA offices. This takes you to a search engine where you can search by a person's name, by the kind of FAA office, by state, and so forth. For example, I enter NY (New York) in the State box and got a listing of the Flight Standards District Offices and the International Field Office in New York State. Each of these was blue-highlighted, which took me to an alphabetical directory of the inspectors in the office. Each inspector's name was blue-highlighted, and when I clicked on that I got the name, phone number, fax number, whether the individual is operations or airworthiness, and the e-mail address. When you click on the e-mail address, you can send e-mail directly to the person. I tried several states and got pretty much the same results. Some offices didn't provide the e-mail address of the inspectors but did provide the telephone number and mailing address, and some regions do not yet have all their offices on-line. And there are a couple of other quirks, too. For example, if you search in Virginia—VA—the Washington Dulles FSDO doesn't appear, only the Richmond, VA FSDO. You have to search under DC—District of Columbia—for the Washington Dulles FSDO; even though it is located in Chantilly, VA, the Washington FSDO is within the jurisdiction of the District of Columbia. (I told you we were a bureaucracy.)

Regardless, this link is very useful for locating FAA FSDO's and finding a specific person to talk to when you have a question or concern.

Last, but far from least, on <av-info.faa.gov> is a link to the FAA Flight Standards Regulatory Support Division, AFS-600. Located in Oklahoma City, OK, this division develops airman testing standards, conducts designee standardization training, and has responsibility for FAA aviation data systems and automation infrastructure management.

Spend some time at AFS-600's site. It's one of those that has links beyond what we've described here and in the previous two parts. Their site is broken down into:

- Airworthiness Products
- Pilot/Aircrew Products
- Course Schedule and Registration
- Publications: Training, Testing, and Technical
- Forms and Applications
- Miscellaneous Areas of Interest

In fact, click on "Miscellaneous Areas of Interest" then click on the button that says "Do Not Click Here" for some fun. Who says bureaucrats can't have a sense of humor?

Well, that's it. (The sighs of relief are thundering, now.) I hope this overview has helped to make some sense of the masses of FAA information available to you. As I said in part 1, the difficult part is knowing where to start, and we have provided you several good starting points. Both the fun and the promise of the Internet is once you start, your destinations are limitless. It's no different with aviation information. Like anything on the Internet, some of that information is good, and some is bad.

Believe it or not, the FAA sites won't steer you wrong. ;-)

OTHER AVIATION INTERNET SITES

(Non-FAA, so the disclaimer is in effect, and we're not describing them because surfing and learning is half the fun.)

www.aopa.org
www.eaa.org
www.safeflying.com
www.landings.com
www.avweb.com
www.safety.com
www.airsafety.com
www.USUA.com
home.att.net/~airjet
www.awgnet.com
airsource1.com
aso.solid.com
www.mcgraw-hill.com/aviation/index.html
www.erols.com/burnside/cpa.htm
www.crewgear.com
www.forecast1.com
www.nasm.edu
www.NBAA.org
www.flightdata.com/propilot
www.wingsonline.com
www.air-transport.org
www.erau.edu
www.gtsfsd.com/aviation/GTEaviation.html
www.intellicast.com
wxp.atms.purdue.edu
www.univ-wea.com
cirrus.sprl.umich.edu/wxnet/maps.htm
yang.sprl.umich.edu/wxnet
www.thetrip.com
www.WEATHER.com
and probably thousands more!

To search for other aviation sites, try <www.infoseek.com/Home>, <www.search.com>, <www.yahoo.com>, or any other general-purpose search engine.

• Military versus Civil Pilots

I have always disagreed with the time constraint defined in FAR § 61.73(c) and have never taken the time to express my disagreement, that is until now that the subject has surfaced in your July/August 1998 article, "Attention All Current Military Pilots."

There is a dichotomy within Part 61--specifically §§ 61.56 and 61.73. Part 61, in essence, is saying that a pilot with a Private, Commercial, or ATP certificate who has not flown for the past 5, 10, or 20 years, can, with a current medical certificate and a completed two hour Flight Review, be cleared to fly. However, a military pilot who has not flow for 12 months is not eligible for a private or commercial certificate based on military competency. Who would I be safer with? To me the answer is obvious, the military pilot.

The FAR addressing these two areas of currency is not consistent and should be changed.

Col. Lonnie L. Liss (USAF Ret)
ATP, CFI, CFII, and MEI

We appreciate your comments. However, we must disagree with you on several points. First, regardless of how long a civil private, commercial, or airline transport pilot has not flown, if they meet all of the regulatory and currency requirements to fly, they can fly. As a flight instructor, you know that although a flight review requires only a minimum of one hour of ground training and one hour of flight training, no competent flight instructor will sign off a pilot as successfully completing a flight review unless that pilot, using part of the text from FAR § 61.56, has "demonstrated the safe exercise of the privileges of the pilot certificate." A flight review might take a few hours or, if necessary, many hours for a pilot who is not current and proficient to successfully demonstrate competency. The flight instructor is responsible for determining if that pilot is safe to fly on that day.

But the issue here is not the currency or competency of civil pilots, the issue here is the ability of military pilots to exercise the special privileges given them under FAR § 61.73, Military pilots or former military pilots: Special rules, in a timely manner. The privilege is there for those military pilots willing and able to take advantage of the rule. For those military pilots who fail to comply with the rule, they then must satisfactorily complete the appropriate FAA knowledge and practical tests for the ratings they seek.

• New York City VFR Corridor

The response to the letter regarding the New York City VFR Corridor in the Flight Forum section (*FAA Aviation News*, September 1998) contains a minor factual error.

While it is true that aircraft flying VFR within the confines of the corridor need not be in contact with ATC, the airspace is not uncontrolled. Airspace within the corridor is designated as Class E (controlled) with a floor of 700 feet above ground level (AGL). This means that VFR pilots at or above 700' AGL may not use the reduced VFR weather minima applicable to uncontrolled airspace, and IFR flight requires an ATC clearance.

Also, ATC may provide traffic advisory and flight-following service to those pilots who request it, on a workload-permitting basis.

Edward M. Green
Operations Supervisor
Boston Air Route
Traffic Control Center

Thanks for emphasizing this fact.

• Military Competency Knowledge Test

This letter is about your article "Attention All Current Military Pilots" in the July/August 1998 issue. It was very well-written and informative with one exception. The local Flight Standards District Office (FSDO) no longer gives the "special knowledge test for military pilots."

Frank L. Allen
Oklahoma City FSDO

You're right. Military pilots wanting to take the test must go to their local FAA-approved, commercial, computerized testing center. The FSDO can provide the names and addresses of the local test centers, or the pilots can check with a fixed-based operator (FBO) at their local airport for the names and addresses of their FAA-approved computer testing centers. Pilots may also find the names and addresses of the various test centers on the Internet.

FAA AVIATION NEWS welcomes comments. We may edit letters for style and/or length. If we have more than one letter on the same topic, we will select one representative letter to publish. Because of our publishing schedules, responses may not appear for several issues. We do not print anonymous letters, but we do withhold names or send personal replies upon request. Readers are reminded that questions dealing with immediate FAA operational issues should be referred to their local Flight Standards District Office or Air Traffic facility. Send letters to FORUM Editor, FAA AVIATION NEWS, AFS-805, 800 Independence Ave., SW, Washington, DC 20591, or FAX them to (202) 267-9463; e-mail address: Dean.Chamberlain@faa.gov

GPS FIX NAMES PLACED ON APPROACH CHARTS

Beginning this past January, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the government agency which produces aeronautical charts with the FAA, began placing unique, five-letter fix names to GPS Overlay non-precision approach charts. Unique names have also been added to selected points on GPS Overlay Instrument Approach Procedure (IAP) charts that are necessary for use of the IAP chart when using electronic database navigation systems.

All existing fixes which define the instrument approach procedure—IAF, MAP, step-down fixes—now have unique five-letter fix names assigned. Additional points which are not part of the actual instrument approach procedure but which are necessary for situational awareness by users of electronic database navigation systems also have a five-letter name charted in parentheses with the location depicted with a small "x."

The FAA has assigned each unique five-letter name to fixes on U.S. Government GPS Overlay procedures to ensure that all chart and navigation database providers use the same fix names for each specific IAP. To complete the process of assigning fix names to all GPS Overlay IAP will take approximately two years.

FOQA ANYONE?

In a major step towards the goal of reducing the aviation accident rate by 80% over the next decade, FAA Administrator Jane Garvey announced on December 2 a new policy on gathering and using aviation safety data to prevent accidents-the Flight Operations Quality Assurance (FOQA) Program.

For the past three years, the FAA and airlines have worked on a FOQA test to prove the concept of using deidentified Digital Flight Data Recorder (DFDR) data to identify safety problems. Airlines participating in the study included United, US Airways, Continental, and Alaska Air Group. It has only been the technological advances in DFDR of the last decade that afford the ability to gather this information quickly and efficiently.

Information, gathered by industry participating in the FOQA study, was used to improve the safety of approaches at more than a dozen airports worldwide. In addition, it documented unusual autopilot disconnects, Ground Proximity Warning System warnings, excessive take-off angles,

Ilyushin Aviation photo.

The recently U.S. Type Certificated IL-103 flies over the Russian countryside. The utility category aircraft has a Continental engine, a Hartzell popeller, and tricycle gear (with a castering nosewheel), and claims a 121-knot crusie at 90% power. Useful load is 970 pounds.

unstable landing approaches, hard landings, and compliance with standard operating procedures. FOQA data has also been used for monitoring fuel efficiency, enhancing engine condition monitoring, noise abatement compliance, rough runway surfaces, and aircraft structural fatigue.

FOQA will provide a source of objective information that can be used to identify needed improvements in flight crew performance, air carrier training programs, operating and air traffic control procedures, airport maintenance and design, as well as aircraft operations and design. Previously, this information was used to identify clues to accidents after they had already occurred.

In a policy statement appearing in the Federal Register on December 2, 1998, the FAA said it would "refrain from using deidentified FOQA information to undertake enforcement actions except in egregious cases, i.e., those that do not meet the conditions listed in section 9 paragraph c of Advisory Circular 00-46D governing the Aviation Safety Reporting Program." This policy applies only to information collected specifically in an FAA-approved FOQA program.

"This policy is an example of our pro-active approach of looking at safety issues before they become a tragedy,"said Administrator Garvey in announcing the FAA's new policy. "Tests of FOQA data gathering and analysis have already produced important safety advances and the adoption of this policy on a broader scale can raise the safety bar even further for the traveling public."

Someone must be doing something right, because in 1998 there were no airline fatalities in the U.S.

EXCELLENCE IN AVIATION AWARD NOMINATIONS

The FAA has issued a call for nominations for its 1999 Excellence in Aviation Award. This is a highly competitive, non-monetary award that recognizes individuals and/or institutions for superior research efforts and for how these efforts have benefited the aviation community.

This is the third year that the FAA will be presenting this prestigious award. Each year the nominee pool has grown, reflecting a broad spectrum of aviation related research activities. Nominations and supporting documentation for the 1999 Excellence in Aviation Award will be accepted through March 31, 1999.

For additional information or to receive a nomination form please contact Dr. Terry Kraus, FAA's Office of Aviation Research, at (202) 267-3854 or by e-mail at terry.kraus@faa.gov.

100,000 YOUNG EAGLES TAKE FLIGHT IN 1998

In July of 1992 the Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) announced its intention to provide free demonstration flights to one million young people by the end of 2003. Six years later, EAA has introduced more than 460,000 Young Eagles to the sky with over 100,000 of that number in 1998 alone. Those young people were flown by more than 8,000 pilots, which included EAA members and other pilots from approved partner organizations, including the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association (COPA), the Civil Air Patrol (CAP), and numerous other aviation groups.

"Through Young Eagles, young people have an opportunity to discover more about aviation, which they may have never considered as an option for themselves previously. While we're pleased about young pilots who come out of Young Eagles, we're just as enthusiastic about the hundreds of thousands of young people—and their families—who come away with a new understanding and appreciation for aviation," said Steve Buss, Executive Director of the Young Eagles Program.

More information regarding Young Eagles is available through its website (www.youngeagles.org) or the EAA main website (www.eaa.org) or by writing to EAA Young Eagles, P.O. Box 3065, Oshkosh, WI 54903-3065 or by calling (920) 426-4831.

FAA WANTS TO PUMP YOU UP—ISSUES PRIORITY LETTER AD

Aircraft owners who installed a Parker Hannifin Airborne dry air pump this year are on the receiving end of a priority AD allowing just two days to make a change or fly only day-VFR. A batch of pumps manufactured from January through October 13 of this year and installed on Cessna, Piper, Mooney, and Raytheon aircraft had bad flexible couplings. That led to a number of failures, which in turn, led pilots to brush up on their partial panel skills. If you had an Airborne dry vacuum pump installed after January 1, 1998, Priority Letter AD 98-23-01 applies to you...like now! (NOTE: Avweb's NewsWire includes the full text of the Priority Letter Airworthiness Directive.)

VIOLATORS BEWARE

A former FAA-certificated check pilot was found guilty of making false statements in the certification of airmen during check rides.

The investigation was led by a special agent of the Denver Civil Aviation Security Division and was assisted by Denver FSDO personnel. The convicted felon was sentenced to three years probation, $300 in fines and costs, and 200 hours community service. Such investigations send a strong message to the aviation community that illegal activity concerning matters regulated by the FAA will not be tolerated.

Editor's Runway

from the pen of Phyllis-Anne Duncan

Did Aviation Cooperation End the Cold War?

Wow, pretty heady topic for a government aviation safety magazine, but the FAA participated in an event last December that, in future, may be considered seminal in the history of two superpowers--the FAA issued a U.S. type certificate to a Russian-manufactured aircraft. So, as a political-science major, I couldn't help but draw some conclusions from this.

I can remember as a grade school student in the late 1950's and early 1960's participating in the "Duck and Cover" exercise, bringing my shoe box of "survival" supplies to school, and being taught to look out for suspicious people and aircraft. Then, the sight of any kind of Russian airplane meant trouble--head for the fall-out shelter.

Consequently, to me it's amazing that a scant 40 years later, we could be welcoming Russian aircraft into the airspace of the U.S. Of course, air show performers and lovers of vintage aircraft have been flying Sukhoi's and MIG's over here for years, but now we have the opportunity to purchase a production Russian aircraft built to standards that meet or exceed those for an American-manufactured aircraft.

There was a time when we couldn't imagine the Russian (then Soviet) government as anything except an enemy to our safety and security. Now, in a prime example of global partnership, our FAA and its counterparts, the Aviation Register and the Federal Aviation Authority of Russia (FAAR), have worked together on this certification project to a successful end.

Aviation, and the universal love for it, has truly ended the Cold War.

An FAA news release issued on December 17, 1998--the 95th anniversary of the Wright Brothers' first flight (how's that for symbolism)--stated, "[the FAA's] Small Aircraft Directorate has issued the first U.S. Type Certificate for a Russian type design, clearing the way for import into the U.S." A fairly uncomplicated declaration for an event that has more complexity behind it than we might realize, given that most of us can remember what it was like for the Soviets to be, as one American President put it, an "evil empire." The FAA team has watched history evolve first hand, in a program that has changed the perspective of everyone involved on both sides of the Atlantic.

For example, this cooperation between the aviation authorities of the U.S. and the former USSR would be incomprehensible to my late father and others of his generation. Frederick W. Duncan was a World War II veteran who met the Soviet Army in Czechoslovakia as part of the U.S. Third Army, back when we were still allies. During the Korean conflict he drew the duty of guarding the U.S. sector in West Berlin where his tank faced a Soviet tank across the barbed wire that eventually became the Berlin Wall. I asked him once if he ever thought about the person in the tank on the other side, and from his experience in World War II he indicated he thought it was probably someone just like him, a young man, maybe from a farm, newly married and hoping to start a family. But, to my father and to two generations of Americans, that Soviet tanker, who was only doing his duty, was on the "wrong" side, and we were on the "right." Things were simpler, then, more black and white with no shades of gray.

Several years ago as I researched some history for an *FAA Aviation News* article on Soviet women fighter pilots in World War II, I pondered the women in those cockpits, then our allies, who only a few years later became our enemies. In the 1980's when the "Night Witches," as their German adversaries called them, met U.S. WASP's and some 99's who came to visit them, we found we weren't all that different after all--a universal truth.

That is why the everyday event of issuing a type certificate--something fairly commonplace for us in the FAA--could have far more significance than politics or economics. This act further closed a rift between peoples who, after all, were more alike than disparate political beliefs may have assumed.

The possible symbol of this paradigm shift is the Ilyushin IL-103, an all-metal, two-seat, propeller, Utility category aircraft powered by a single 210hp Teledyne Continental IO-360ES engine. The IL-103 was issued U.S. TC A45CE. (See the photo on page 27.)

Begun when there still was a USSR, the certification of the IL-103 came as the result of a shadow certification process conducted by our FAA's Aircraft Certification Service and its Russian counterpart, the Aviation Register. According to our December news release, "Since 1993, the Russians have demonstrated their expertise in the area of small airplane design and production. A favorable technical assessment of the Russian aircraft certification system led to the signing of a Bilateral Aviation Safety Agreement (BASA)... . The BASA...outlines how the two countries can reciprocally certify each other's aircraft."

I can't stress the irony enough. Picture this: Several years ago a German man flew a single-engine Cessna into the then Soviet Union, and though he was hailed a hero among the democratized nations of the world, he nearly precipitated an international crisis. Now, American general aviation aircraft can make their way to Russia while the IL-103 trains a new generation of pilots here. It almost boggles the mind of a child of the Cold War--boggles it but feeds her optimism that aviation can and did bring former enemies together in a peaceful endeavor.

And there could be more to follow. The two authorities are now working on another Russian design project, the IL-96T, a wide-body, transport-category cargo aircraft. With our past partnership in the Mir Space Station and the International Space Station under construction, aviation is a broad avenue to that which always seems just out of our grasp--world peace.

So, as a 30-year old movie proclaimed, "The Russians are coming! The Russians are coming!"--but it just might be okay.

'Til next time...

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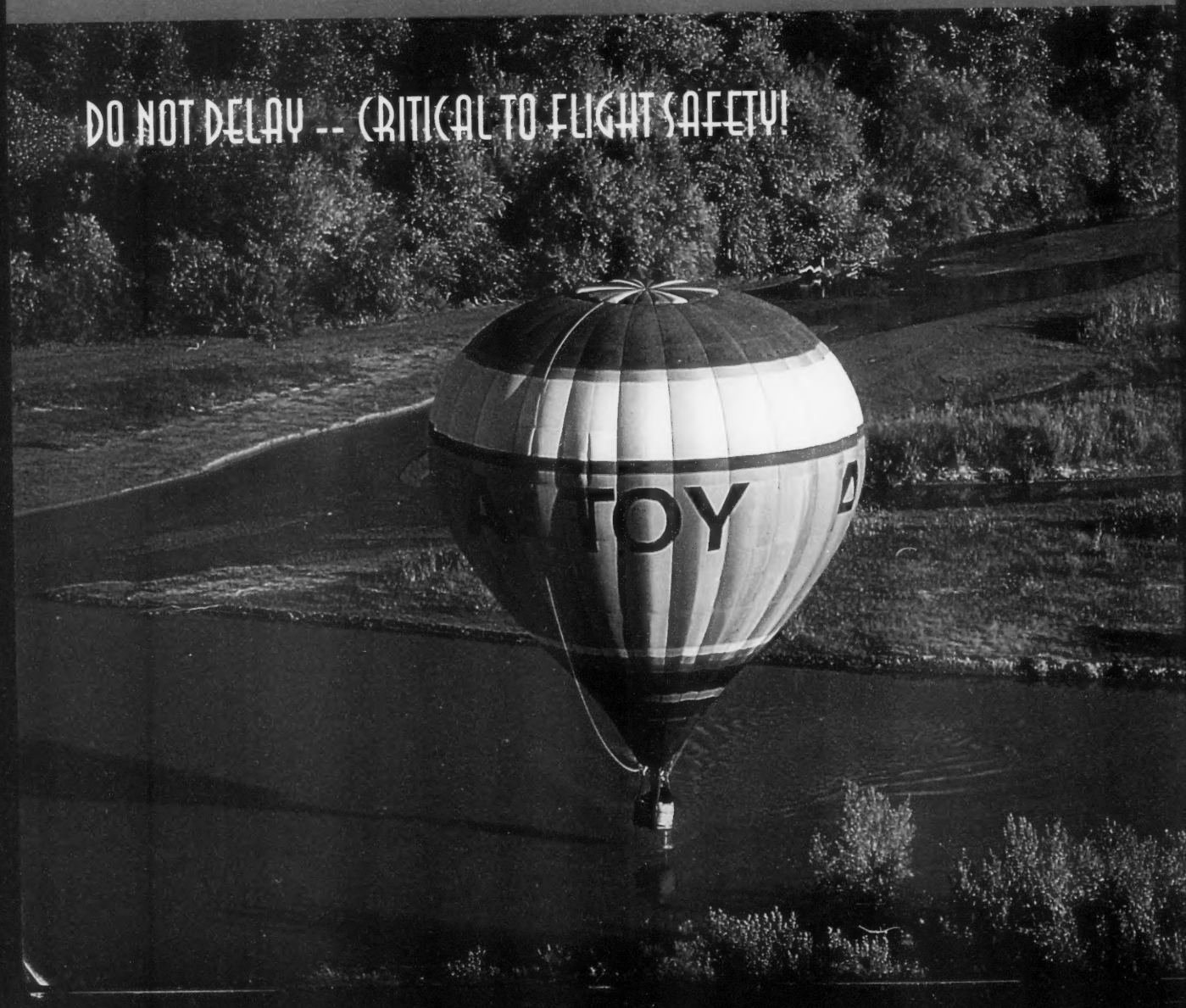
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